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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2767
INFO RUEHSF/AMEMBASSY SOFIA PRIORITY 0976
RUEHTI/AMEMBASSY TIRANA PRIORITY 0229
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL PRIORITY 9680

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OTRA](#) [PHUM](#) [AL](#) [BU](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: COUNTRY CLEARANCE GRANTED FOR DRL/IRF STAFF MEMBER
MICHAEL MATES TO TRAVEL TO TURKEY FEBRUARY 20-25, 2006

REF: STATE 08957

¶1. (U) Mission welcomes and grants country clearance to DRL/IRF Desk Officer Michael Mates to travel to Ankara and Istanbul February 20 - 25, 2006. The purpose of the visit is to meet religious leaders and NGOs and advocate for USG positions regarding religious freedom with host government officials.

¶2. (U) The point of contact for the visit in Ankara is Political Officer Philip Kaplan who can be reached through the embassy switchboard at (90)(312) 455-5555 extension 0, 24 hours a day. The point of contact at the American Consulate in Istanbul is Political Officer Alicia Allison who can be reached through the consulate switchboard at (90) (212) 335-9000 extension 0. Additional scheduling and logistical information will be forwarded in separate communication.

¶3. (U) Visas: All Americans traveling to Turkey must have a valid visa. Travelers on tourist passports without a visa can obtain a visa valid for one entry/three months at port of entry upon payment of a USD 20 fee. This fee is payable only in U.S. dollars cash. Travelers on diplomatic passports must obtain their visa prior to travel. There is no fee for official travel if the visa is obtained outside of Turkey.

¶4. (U) Health Safety: Information on vaccinations and other health precautions can be obtained from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention hotline for international travelers (tel: 1-877-394-747); fax 1-800-232-3299; or via the internet at [HTTP://www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

¶5. (U) Security Assessment: In the aftermath of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) there continues to be the potential for both transnational and indigenous terrorist groups to target U.S. interests in Turkey. After the Gulf War, the predecessor to the Turkish Terrorist Group Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front (DHKP/C) assassinated four Americans in Turkey and carried out numerous bombings of U.S. targets (mostly private sector businesses, although two rockets were directed toward the Consulate General in Istanbul). Subsequent to the ending of OIF hostilities, there have been isolated terrorist bombings attributed to DHKP/C and other indigenous terrorist groups in protest of OIF. Other Turkish terrorist groups with anti-Western sympathies include Marxist-Leninist Communist Party (MLKP), Turkish Communist Party/Marxist Leninist (TKP/ML), Turkish Workers and Peasants Revolutionary Army (TIKKO) and Islamic Greater Eastern Raiders/Front (IBDA/C).

Al-Qa'ida threats to target U.S. facilities in Turkey have been public knowledge for some time. On November 15, two synagogues in Istanbul were the targets of suicide car bombs. On November 20, 2003, the British Consulate General and the London-based HSBC bank in Istanbul were damaged by powerful

explosions, killing dozens and wounding hundreds. These incidents represent a significant change from prior attacks in Turkey, which have previously involved small-scale, random bombings and small numbers of casualties. The investigations of these incidents in Istanbul remain open but transnational terrorist links are suspected. The potential for violence and terrorist actions against U.S. citizens and interests continue.

The Turkish National Police (TNP) is quite responsive in their role as protector of U.S. diplomatic and military interests in Turkey. The TNP has provided enhanced coverage at each of our facilities in Ankara, Istanbul, Adana and Izmir. The incidence of crime, both violent and the more traditional tourist crimes (pick pocketing, purse-snatching, etc.), is relatively low throughout Turkey. Visitors to Istanbul should be aware that tourist-type crimes are more prevalent there, especially in the traditionalist tourist areas, such as Sultanahmet and Istiklal Caddesi. The security office encourages visitors to report any security incidents, including surveillance, to the RSO immediately.

Useful security information about Turkey is available on the following websites:

--Embassy Ankara: [HTTP://WWW.USEMB-ANKARA.ORG.TR](http://WWW.USEMB-ANKARA.ORG.TR) (Click on Security Matters)

--Consulate General Istanbul:
[HTTP://USCONSULATE-ISTANBUL.ORG.TR](http://USCONSULATE-ISTANBUL.ORG.TR)

16. (U) For further information regarding travel in Turkey, consult the consular information sheet. The consulate information sheet and public announcements are available on the internet at: [HTTP://TRAVEL.STATE.GOV](http://TRAVEL.STATE.GOV)

Other information is available on the following websites:

--The State Department Consular Affairs (CA) websites:
[HTTP://WWW.TRAVEL.STATE.GOV/TURKEY.HTML](http://WWW.TRAVEL.STATE.GOV/TURKEY.HTML)

--US Embassy Ankara:
[HTTP://WWW.USEMB-ANKARA.ORG.TR](http://WWW.USEMB-ANKARA.ORG.TR)
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